

# AFTER THE FIRE



CSFD



# AFTER THE FIRE

Date of the fire:

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Time of the fire:

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Location of the fire:

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Fire incident report  
number:

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Fire investigator:

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Insurance company:

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Insurance company  
phone number:

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Insurance policy number:

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Vehicle identification number (VIN) for cars, trucks and motorcycles destroyed:

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Other information:

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# WHERE TO START

A fire will change your life in many ways. Knowing where to begin and who can help you is important. The Colorado Springs Fire Department hopes you find this information useful as you return to normal.

After experiencing a house fire, you could find yourself emotionally drained and feeling scared, and in some ways violated. Even if no lives are lost in the fire, the first time you see your home – parts of it possibly gutted and blackened with smoke, water damage all over the floors, and your belongings reduced to ashes – the emotional toll can be significant. Once the smoke clears, the fire trucks have gone, and the neighbors have gone back inside, the process of recovering from this tragedy will begin.

## STEP-BY-STEP

Step 1 - Temporary Housing

Step 2 - Taking Care of Your Pet

Step 3 - Plan For Being Displaced

Step 4 - Work With Your Insurance

Step 5 - Secure Your Home

Step 6 - Returning to Your Home

Understanding Fire Operations

Understanding Fire Investigations

Records Request

Replacing Damaged Documents

Finances

Fire Incident Information

Notes

# AFTER THE FIRE

## STEP 1 - TEMPORARY HOUSING

If the fire was severe enough to make your residence unlivable (even temporarily), one of the first things to consider is finding temporary housing. The fire department can arrange to have the Red Cross come to your home almost immediately after the fire. The American Red Cross can assist you with the following needs:

- Temporary housing
- Food
- Medicine
- Eyeglasses
- Clothing
- Other essential items

### NOTIFY THESE PEOPLE IMMEDIATELY OF YOUR RELOCATION:

- ☐ Insurance agent/company
- ☐ Family and Friends
- ☐ Employer
- ☐ Child's school
- ☐ Post office
- ☐ Delivery Services
- ☐ Fire & police departments
- ☐ Utility companies

Unless your house fire was extremely small, your home will suffer extensive smoke and water damage throughout, even if contained to a single room. The smoke that comes from burning wood, plastics, and other items in your home, is toxic to humans and animals and should not be inhaled too long. Even if you think it is not that bad, you should really consider staying somewhere else until the damage has been repaired, especially if you have young children. While some insurance policies will pay for temporary lodging, many will not.

## STEP 2 - TAKING CARE OF YOUR PET

If you have family pets that require shelter in the event you are unable to stay in your residence, there are resources available. Keep in mind that there are many hotels and motels in the Colorado Springs area that accept pets. The Humane Society may provide emergency temporary shelter in cases such as these. If called to respond, the Humane Society will take the pet into the shelter and provide immediate temporary shelter for them.

### PLEASE NOTE:

**The Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region will vaccinate and make sure the animals are licensed in the city before releasing to the owners.**

**To reach the Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region, call:**

**719 473-1741**

# AFTER THE FIRE

## STEP 3 - PLAN FOR BEING DISPLACED

### COMMONLY NEEDED ITEMS FOR 24 HOUR DISPLACEMENT

- ☐ Cell phone/iPhone/Tablet (chargers)
- ☐ Personal phonebook
- ☐ Wallets/purse/keys
- ☐ Glasses/contact lenses/hearing aids/dentures
- ☐ Medicines/medical supplies
- ☐ Important documents (driver's license, Social Security card, birth certificates, passports, tax paperwork, INSURANCE PAPERS)
- ☐ Family pictures, thumb drive or other storage media
- ☐ Jewelry
- ☐ Bathroom essentials (hygiene items, special needs items)
- ☐ Clothing (season appropriate)
- ☐ Laptop computer (charger)
- ☐ Camera/camcorder (charger)
- ☐ Baby care items (diapers, clothing, undamaged formula, bottles)
- ☐ Comfort items for children (blanket, stuffed toy, doll)
- ☐ School supplies for children (school books, back packs, clothing)
- ☐ Animal/pet supplies

## RESOURCES

CITY OF COLORADO SPRINGS		AREA SCHOOL DISTRICTS	
Fire & Police Emergency	911	School District 2 - Harrison	719-579-2000
Fire Administration	719-385-5950	School District 3 - Widefield	719-391-3000
Police Administration	719-444-7000	School District 11	719-520-2000
Colorado Springs Utilities	719-448-4800	School District 12 - Cheyenne Mtn.	719-475-6100
American Red Cross	719-632-3563	School District 14 - Manitou Springs	719-685-2024
Humane Society	719 473-1741	School District 20 - Academy	719-234-1200
US Postal Service	800-275-8777	School District 38 - Lewis-Palmer	719-488-4700
Ft. Carson 24hr Assistance	719-526-2333	School District 49 - Falcon	719-495-3601

# AFTER THE FIRE

## STEP 4 - WORK WITH YOUR INSURANCE

### IF YOU HAVE HOMEOWNER'S OR RENTER'S INSURANCE:

- ☐ Notify your insurance agent immediately
- ☐ Ask your agent what to do about the immediate needs of the dwelling, such as covering doors, windows, and other exposed areas, and pumping out water
- ☐ Coordinate with the insurance company before contracting for any service because if you enter into a contract without the knowledge and consent of the insurance company, they may refuse to pay and you may be left with bills to pay that otherwise might have been covered by the insurer
- ☐ Ask your agent what actions are required of you
- ☐ Consider taking photos of the damage
- ☐ Do not throw away any damaged goods until after an inventory is made, all damages are taken into consideration in developing your insurance claim
- ☐ Beginning immediately, save receipts for any money you spend as these receipts are important in showing the insurance company what money you have spent related to your fire loss and also for verifying losses claimed on your income taxes

Your insurance agent can be of great assistance after you experience property loss or damage and will provide detailed instructions on protecting the property, conducting an inventory and contacting fire damage restoration companies. Some policyholders may be required to make an inventory of damaged personal property showing in detail the quantity, description, purchase date and purchase price for the items.

### NOTES:



# AFTER THE FIRE

## STEP 4 - WORK WITH YOUR INSURANCE

### IF YOU DO NOT HAVE INSURANCE:

If you are not insured, try contacting private organizations for aid and assistance (beware of scams and unsolicited contractors; consider checking with Better Business Bureau). Renters are not usually covered by their landlord's policy. You are responsible for providing insurance coverage for your personal belongings.

Renter's insurance policies are available from most insurance companies. If you are a student renter and you are still considered a dependent, you may be covered by your parents' insurance policy.

Your recovery from a fire loss may be based upon your own resources and help from your community. Private organizations that may be sources of aid or information.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES	
American Red Cross	719-632-3563
Salvation Army	719-636-3891
El Paso County Dept. of Human Services	719-636-0000
United Way	211
Care and Share	719-528-1247
Peak Vista Immediate Health Care	719-632-5700
Ecumenical Services	719-228-6784

### NOTES:

# AFTER THE FIRE

## STEP 5 - SECURE YOUR HOME

Another consideration is making sure your property is secure and your residence is protected from the elements, the threat of robbery, or vandalism. Once it is safe to enter the damaged site, be very careful. A fire scene contains many hazards that you may not see. Fires can rekindle from hidden, smoldering remains. Roofs, floors and ceilings may be damaged and subject to collapse. Be watchful for structural damage caused by fire.

Normally, the fire department will see that utilities (water, electricity, gas) are either safe to use, or are disconnected before they leave the site. If your residence is uninhabitable, or you must relocate for any reason (either temporarily or for an extended period), please remove your valuables if possible. Protect salvageable items from further damage from the weather or theft.

If you are the owner of the property involved in the fire, board up broken windows and doors or any other possible means of entry from the outside. Search for “Fire and Water Damage Restoration” companies in the Colorado Springs area that specialize in fire clean up and building security. Some insurance policies cover the cost of emergency or temporary repairs to protect your property from further damage and theft.

### IF IT IS SAFE TO DO SO, LOCATE:

- ☐ Driver's licenses
- ☐ Social Security cards
- ☐ Passports, other identification
- ☐ Credit cards, bank books,
- ☐ Important financial documents
- ☐ Insurance information
- ☐ Medications
- ☐ Eyeglasses, hearing aids, prosthetic devices
- ☐ Valuables, cash, jewelry, heirlooms

### PLEASE NOTE:

**If the utilities were turned off, do not attempt to turn them on yourself. Contact the proper utility to have this done safely.**

**Food, beverages, and medicine that were exposed to heat, smoke, soot, and water should not be consumed.**

### NOTES:




# AFTER THE FIRE

## STEP 6 - RETURNING TO YOUR HOME

Professional fire and water damage restoration businesses may be the best source of cleaning and restoring your personal belongings. Companies offering this service can be found in the phone directory.

### CLOTHING

A word of caution before you begin, test garments before using any treatment, and follow the manufacturer's instructions. Several of the cleaning mixtures described in this section contain the substance Tri-Sodium Phosphate, or TSP. This is a caustic substance commonly used as a cleaning agent. It should be used with care and stored out of reach of children and pets. Wear rubber gloves when using, and read the label for further information. Smoke odor and soot sometimes can be washed from clothing. The following formula may work for clothing that can be bleached:

- 4 to 6 Tablespoons TSP
- 1 cup chlorine bleach
- 1 gallon warm water

Mix well, add clothes, and rinse with clear water. Dry thoroughly.

An effective way to remove mildew from clothing is to wash with soap and warm water, rinse, and then dry in the sun. If the stain has not disappeared, use lemon juice and salt, or a diluted solution of household chlorine bleach.

### COOKING UTENSILS

Your pots, pans, flatware, etc., should be washed with hot, soapy water, rinsed, and then polished with a fine-powdered cleaner. You can polish copper and brass with special polish, salt sprinkled on a piece of lemon, or salt sprinkled on a cloth saturated with vinegar.

### ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES

Do not use appliances that have been exposed to water or steam until you have them serviced by a professional. Steam can remove the lubricant from some moving parts.

### LOCKS AND HINGES

Locks (especially iron locks) should be taken apart and wiped with oil. If locks cannot be removed, squirt machine oil through a bolt opening or keyhole, and work the knob to distribute the oil. Hinges also should be thoroughly cleaned and oiled.

# AFTER THE FIRE

## STEP 6 - RETURNING TO YOUR HOME

### **FOOD**

Wash canned and jarred goods in detergent and water. If labels come off, be sure to mark the contents on the can or jar with a grease pencil or marker. Do not use canned goods that are bulged or rusted. Do not refreeze frozen food that has thawed. If food has been exposed to heat or if there are concerns about its safety, please discard the food in question.

To remove odor from your refrigerator or freezer, wash the inside with a solution of baking soda and water, or use one cup of vinegar or household ammonia to one gallon of water. Baking soda in an open container or a piece of charcoal also can be placed in the refrigerator or freezer to absorb odor.

### **RUGS AND CARPETS**

Rugs and carpets should be allowed to dry thoroughly. Throw rugs can be cleaned by beating, sweeping, or vacuuming, and then shampooing. Rugs should be dried as quickly as possible. Lay them flat and expose them to warm, circulated, dry air.

A fan turned on the rugs will speed drying. Make sure the rugs are thoroughly dry. Even though the surface seems dry, moisture remaining at the base of the tufts can quickly cause the rug to mildew and rot. For information on cleaning and preserving carpets, please call your carpet dealer or installer, or a qualified carpet cleaning professional.

### **LEATHER AND BOOKS**

Wipe leather goods with a damp cloth, then a dry cloth. You can stuff purses and shoes with newspaper to help retain their shape. Leave suitcases open. Leather goods should be dried away from heat and sun. When leather goods have dried out, clean with leather cleaner. Rinse leather and suede jackets in cold water and dry away from heat and sun.

Wet books must be taken care of as soon as possible. The best method to save wet books is to freeze them in a vacuum freezer. This special freezer will remove the moisture without damaging the pages. If there is a delay in locating such a freezer, or one is not available to you, place them in a normal freezer.

# AFTER THE FIRE

## STEP 6 - RETURNING TO YOUR HOME

### WALLS, FLOORS AND FURNITURE

To remove soot and smoke from walls, floors, and furniture use a mild soap or detergent, or mix together the following solution:

- 4 to 6 Tablespoons TSP
- 1 cup chlorine bleach
- 1 gallon warm water

Wear rubber gloves when cleaning with this solution. Be sure to rinse your walls and furniture with clear warm water and dry thoroughly after washing. Wash a small area at a time, working from the floor up, then rinse the wall with clear water immediately. Ceilings should be washed last.

### DO NOT REPAINT UNTIL WALLS AND CEILINGS ARE COMPLETELY DRY

Your wallpaper also can be repaired. Use a commercial paste to re-paste a loose edge or section. Contact your wallpaper dealer or installer for information on wallpaper cleaners. Washable wallpaper can be cleaned like any ordinary wall, but take care not to soak the paper. Work from bottom to top to prevent streaking.

### WOOD FURNITURE

- Do not dry your furniture in the sun. The wood will warp and twist out of shape.
- Clear-off any mud and dirt.
- Scrub wood furniture or fixtures with a stiff brush and a cleaning solution.
- Wet wood can decay and mold, so dry thoroughly. Open doors and windows for good ventilation. Turn on your furnace or air conditioner, if necessary.
- If mold forms, wipe the wood with a cloth soaked in a mixture of borax dissolved in hot water.
- To remove white spots or film, rub the wood surface with a cloth soaked in a solution of ½ cup household ammonia and ½ cup water. Then wipe the surface dry and polish with wax or rub the surface with a cloth soaked in a solution of ½ cup turpentine and ½ cup linseed oil. Be careful – turpentine is flammable.
- You can also rub the wood surface with a fine-grade steel wool pad dipped in liquid polishing wax. Clean the area with a soft cloth and then buff.

# AFTER THE FIRE

## UNDERSTANDING FIRE OPERATIONS

The primary mission of the fire department is to save lives and protect property. If you were home or arrived home as the fire department began working to save your home, you might have been confused or concerned about certain things they were doing. Often, windows are broken intentionally by firefighters, or holes are cut in roofs or ceilings. Please rest assured that this is done when necessary to facilitate putting the fire out.

There are some things that have to be done to prevent the spread of fire or lessen the damage done by smoke and heat. One is to ventilate the area that is being affected by the fire or smoke. When firefighters do have to cut holes or break windows, they are doing so to preserve property or to ensure firefighter safety. It is done in a systematic way that will best facilitate the entire fire suppression operation.

Ventilation can be done many different ways. One of the more common ways is to let the smoke naturally remove itself through openings that have been created by the fire department, or sometimes by using powerful fans set outside the building that will force the smoke and toxic gases out of the structure. You may have noticed that there are small holes in the walls or ceiling that do not seem to benefit ventilation. These holes are made to check for extension of fire into any void spaces between the walls. By checking for extension of the fire, firefighters are reducing (if not eliminating) the chance of a rekindle occurring. A rekindle happens when the fire is thought to be completely extinguished, but hot or smoldering embers in hidden spaces of the building are still present. These can smolder for hours and increase the chance that the fire could start again.

Rekindles were once a usual event, but by checking for extension in the hidden spaces of your home, the chances are considerably reduced or eliminated. However, there are instances where this situation still occurs, even with the best efforts to prevent it. It is not unusual for the building to have a residual smoke odor. If there is ever any visible smoke, any sounds of “crackling”, or if the walls, ceiling, or floor are unusually warm to the touch, do not hesitate to leave the residence and call 911.

Rest assured that the Colorado Springs Fire Department is well trained in the areas of fire suppression, rescue and life safety operations. If you have any questions at all, please contact us at 719 385-5950.

# AFTER THE FIRE

## UNDERSTANDING FIRE INVESTIGATIONS

In accordance with Colorado statutes and through the City Code of Colorado Springs, the Colorado Springs Fire Department is authorized to investigate and determine the origin, cause, and circumstances of all fires that occur within the City of Colorado Springs. As such, members of the CSFD may conduct an in-depth investigation of any fire you experience. The investigation may begin even before the fire has been extinguished. Also, when the fire department responds to a fire we assume control of the property, which may not be released for some time, depending on the length of the fire suppression activities and ensuing investigation.

Investigating a fire can be a laborious task that may require digging through debris, conducting numerous interviews, and thorough documentation of the scene. Fire investigators may contact you several times during the course of their investigation. When the investigation of the scene is complete, the investigator will attempt to notify property owners and occupants. However, if you have questions, or wish to speak to an investigator, please call the CSFD Investigations Unit at 719 385-5950.

### PLEASE NOTE:

**Your insurance provider may have their fire investigator involved. These investigators do not represent the CSFD and we cannot guarantee their level of service. Please work with your insurance provider if you have any questions or concerns.**

## RECORDS REQUEST

To request a copy of the incident report for your fire, please call Fire Investigations at 719 385-7292. Please have the following information ready when you call:

- Date and time of incident
- Address of incident
- Colorado Springs Fire Department incident number
- Name of property owner

### NOTES:

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# AFTER THE FIRE

## REPLACING DAMAGED DOCUMENTS

Below is a checklist of documents you will need to replace if they have been destroyed, and who to contact for information on the replacement process.

ITEM	WHO TO CONTACT
Drivers license, auto registration	Department of Motor Vehicles
Bank Documents (bank books, checks, etc.)	Your bank
Insurance Policies	Your insurance agent/carrier
Military documents (personal)	Department of Veterans Affairs
Passports	Passport Services (US Dept. of State)
Vital Document - birth, death & marriage cert.	El Paso County Health/Clerk & Recorder
EBT/Quest card	El Paso County Dept. of Human Services
Divorce Papers	Circuit court where decree was issued
Social Security/Medicare cards	Local Social Security office
Credit Cards	Issuing company or bank
Titles to deeds	El Paso County Clerk & Recorder
Stocks and Bonds	Issuing company
Wills	Your lawyer
Medical records	Your doctor
Income tax records	Internal Revenue Service
Citizenship documents	U.S. Immigrations & Naturalization Service
Animal registration	Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region
Mortgage documents	Lending institution

### DOCUMENT REPLACEMENT CONTACT INFORMATION

Birth and Death Certificates (CO)	303-692-2000	El Paso County Department of Human Services	719-636-0000
Colorado Dept. of Motor Vehicles	303-205-5600	Social Security Administration	800-772-1213
El Paso County Vital Records	719-575-8492	Military Papers	800-827-1000

# AFTER THE FIRE

## FINANCES

### MONEY REPLACEMENT

Handle burned money as little as possible. Attempt to encase each bill or portion of a bill in plastic wrap for preservation. If half or more of the bill is intact, you can take the remainder to your local Federal Reserve Bank for replacement. Ask your personal bank for the nearest one. You can also contact the U.S. Treasury Department's Mutilated Currency Division at 866 575-2361.

Mutilated or melted coins can be taken to the Federal Reserve Bank, or you can contact the:

**U.S. MINT**  
**800-872-6468**

If your U.S. Savings Bonds have been mutilated or destroyed, call the:

**FEDERAL RESERVE BANK**  
**800 553-2663**

Have the following information ready:

- Name or names on bonds.
- Approximate date or time period when purchased.
- Denominations and approximate number of each.

### KEEP PAYING YOUR MORTGAGE

Even if you have moved out of your home for a month or two while extensive repairs are being made and you are paying to live elsewhere, many banks and mortgage companies will insist that you stay current on your mortgage payments, though some may be generous and offer you a deferment. Don't count on this and be prepared to continue making your regular payments. One way you can prepare for this is to have an emergency fund that includes the amount of your monthly mortgage payment.

### TAXES

Check with an accountant or the Internal Revenue Service about special benefits for people recovering from fire loss.

TAX INFORMATION	
El Paso County Tax Assessor	719-520-6600
Colorado Department of Revenue	303-238-7378
U.S. Internal Revenue Service	
Individual	800-829-1040
Businesses	800-829-4933



# AFTER THE FIRE

NOTES:

# AFTER THE FIRE



# CSFD

Colorado Springs Fire Department  
375 Printers Parkway  
Colorado Springs, CO 80910  
719-385-5950  
[coloradosprings.gov/fire](http://coloradosprings.gov/fire)

